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You can help monitor Okanagan lakes for invasive mussels with this program

Sean Mott



Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society summer student Sierra Collins checks a substrate monitor at Kalamalka Lake as part of a regional invasive mussel monitoring program.

Image Credit: SUBMITTED / Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society

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SUMMERLAND - If you have a dock on a lake in the Okanagan, a local society would like you to keep your eyes peeled for invasive mussels.

The Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society is asking private dock owners up and down the valley to get involved with their citizen science initiative to monitor for invasive mussels in Okanagan lakes.

The society, which has been monitoring for zebra and quagga mussels for seven years, is looking for help from private dock owners on Wood, Okanagan, Kalamalka, Skaha and Osoyoos lakes, according to a media release.

The initiative, which the society says is the first of its kind in the province, provides participants with mussel monitors they can attach to their docks. Owners will have to check their docks every two weeks for the presence of invasive mussels.

"Once established in a lake, invasive mussels harm ecosystems and impact water supplies," Okanagan Basin Water Board Anna Warwick executive director said in the release. "The lakes in the Okanagan basin are especially vulnerable to these impacts."



The society says the invasive mussels were introduced from Europe and Russia into the Great Lakes in the 1980s. Since then, they have spread into lakes around North America, primarily by hitching rides on watercraft. The closest they have come to the Okanagan is Montana.

So far, B.C., Alberta and Washington state are considered mussel free.

Zebra and quagga mussels cause millions of dollars of damage every year in regions where they have established. The society says along with damaging ecosystems, they clog water intake pipes and other water infrastructure, and negatively impact the economy, specifically tourism.

To register for the initiative, contact Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society executive director Lisa Scott at 250-490-7572 or oasiss@shaw.ca.

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